

On the Move

A refugee simulation activity

About the activity

On the Move invites children/young people to follow a refugee family on their journey to safety. The session will take about **50 minutes**, including the debrief and reflection activity.

What happens?

The participants are grouped into refugee families. Each group simulates the journey of a family escaping from the dangers of war. A picture map can be used to chart the progress of the hazardous journey. Alternatively, you could create **nine stations** around the room to represent the journey.



The teacher leads the children through the **nine stages** of the story which will involve them making choices. These choices represent some of the real-life dilemmas which many refugees face.

Afterwards, the participants reflect on what they have done.

Why do it?

This activity encourages the participants to co-operate, negotiate and share. It helps them to understand refugees and to better empathise with their situation.

Preparing the activity

Arrange the group into family groups of **six**. The young people can discuss and decide which family members they will play (e.g. parents, grandparents, children) and they can choose a family name.

Each participant should have the following:

- A photocopy of the picture map and a felt tip or stickers to record the progress of their journey (*optional*)
- A photocopy of the list of belongings from which they choose what to bring on their journey (*this could be written on the board*)
- Six small cards on which to draw their possessions – one item per card
- A plastic wallet or envelope representing their bag to carry their cards

The activity may be carried out while sitting at tables or acted out, in which case plenty of space is needed.

Introducing the activity

Ask the participants to think about and discuss the question: *Why do people move?* Ensure that the young people are aware that there are **many different reasons** why people move.

Explore the difference between moving out of choice and forced migration. Discuss what is meant by the terms 'migrant' and 'refugee', and the difference between the two. The dictionary definition of a migrant is a person who moves from one place to another. Discuss how different words carry different connotations.

The **UN Refugee Agency/UNHCR**

describes the difference between refugees and migrants:

- **Refugees** – *have to* move in order to save their lives or preserve their freedom. They have no protection from their own state.
- **Migrants** – *choose to* move in order to improve the prospects of themselves and their families.

Refugees often have to move because of war, but sometimes there are other reasons such as drought, hunger, ecological disasters or religious persecution.



Some initial discussion about how it would feel to be in the position of the family would be useful to set the tone and the empathising process.

Ask the participants:

- *How would you feel if you were told that you were in great danger and had to quickly leave behind your friends, home, your belongings and maybe even some of your family?*
- *How would it feel not to know where you were going?*
- *Who would you take with you?*
- *What would you take with you?*
- *What do you think you would need for a really long journey?*
- *What would you have to leave behind?*

Running the activity

One

You are about to go on a journey into the unknown. You don't know if you will ever be able to return to your home.

War has broken out in your country. You can hear the sound of gunfire and you know that fighting must be very close by. You have to escape quickly. You have been told that trucks will be arriving soon to take you, your family and neighbours to the coast, where you hope you can find a boat to take you to safety. There is no time to waste. You have to be quick.

The first thing each of you must do is pack a bag for your journey. In your bag you may carry no more than six items. Look at the *belongings list* and choose your items. Think carefully about what you really need to take. Discuss this with the rest of your family. Don't forget: your items might be heavy to carry or difficult to look after. You have ten minutes to draw, on your cards, the six things that you want to take.

(Allow ten minutes)

Your time is up!

Two

The truck has arrived. You can't take anything else. Bring your bag with you and climb on the old wooden truck. You are on your way. Take a last look at your home. You are very unhappy because you have to leave your dog behind but there is nothing that you can do.



You start to cry as you think about all the happy times that you spent with him and wonder what will happen to him now.

The seats in the truck are hard and narrow and, whichever way you sit, you cannot get comfortable. The driver is in a hurry to get you to safety. He speeds along the road and almost loses control as the truck screeches around the corner. One member of your family (*choose who this is*) is thrown from their seat and their bag flies out of the back of the truck.

The driver cannot hear you hear you calling to stop, so the bag is left far behind. This person (*use their name*) has lost everything.

Help them make up for this loss by giving them something from your bag.

They can take one thing from each person in the family. You have two minutes to do this. What have you been left with?
(*Allow two minutes*)

Your time is up!

Three

The truck has to climb up a steep mountain. It gets slower and slower and a strange choking noise comes from the engine. You wonder if this truck will ever get you to the coast.

You hear a mighty bang and the truck grinds to a halt.

Something is very wrong with the truck's engine and it cannot be fixed. You must continue the journey on foot, but you find that your bag is too heavy to carry.

Make it lighter by taking out the heaviest item. You have two minutes to decide what this is and to leave it behind.

What have you been left with?
(*Allow two minutes*)

Your time is up!

Four

You struggle on but you find it harder and harder to keep going. It is a hot day and the sun is beating down. There has been no rain for more than a year so the roads are hard, full of holes and difficult to walk on.

One member of your family falls and hurts their leg (*choose somebody for this*). They cannot go on without help. Two of you will have to carry them (*choose these*).

These three people can no longer carry their bags. The rest of the family will have to help carry their belongings, but remember that no one may carry more than six items, so some things will have to be left behind. Talk about this. You have three minutes to sort this out. What have you been left with now?
(*Allow three minutes*)



Your time is up!

Five

You continue on and enter into a thick green forest. You are all very tired, especially the oldest people in your family, but you have to keep on going. You need to slash and cut your way through the trees. What will you use to do this?

At last you can see the sea and you know you have reached the coast.

The injured person and their helpers are able to carry what is left of their own belongings. Return their belongings to them. You have two minutes to sort these out. What have you got left now?
(*Allow two minutes*)

Your time is up!

Six

You are overjoyed to see the fishing boats waiting in the bay. But unfortunately the boats are very small and none can take more than four people.

Your family must split up into groups of four. This is very hard to do and you may become very upset. You want to stay together and are frightened of what might happen if you separate but you have no choice. You have two minutes to sort out your groups – who will you go with?
(*Allow two minutes*)

Your time is up!

Seven

The fisherman will not let you get on his boat without payment. You have no money but he agrees to let you on board in exchange for the most valuable thing in your bag. The boat is leaving in two minutes and you must decide what you will give him.

The boat is very small and the fisherman now says that you have too much luggage.

No one may carry more than two things. Talk with the others in your family and decide what can be shared and what must be left behind.

You have four minutes. What have you got left?

(Allow four minutes)

Your time is up!

Eight

The boat sets sail. The sea is rough and stormy. The boat starts to leak and sea water floods in. You manage to save your bag but it is soaking wet and anything which could be affected by water is ruined. You have two minutes to check the belongings in your bag and throw away anything that is spoilt.

(Allow two minutes)

Your time is up!

Nine

At last you can see land. It has been a terrible journey! You are anxious to find out what has happened to the others in your family and hope they have arrived safely too. What will happen now?

You don't know but you hope for peace and safety.

This is the end of the activity.

Debrief after the activity

Discuss the activity with the class. Ask them:

- *How would you feel if you were told that you were in great danger and had to quickly leave behind your friends, home, the things that belong to you and maybe even some of your family?*
- *What did you bring at the beginning of the journey?*
- *Did you bring the right things?*
- *Did you think about food and water?*
- *How did you feel when you had to give up your belongings?*
- *What was the most difficult part of the journey?*
- *How did you feel about what was happening to you?*
- *How did you feel when your family had to separate?*
- *How did you feel at the end of the journey?*
- *How might it feel to be a real refugee?*



Following this you may wish to ask the young people to complete a reflective activity. This could be:

- *A story about their journey and what might happen when they arrived at their destinations*
- *A poem to express feelings and experiences that the people in the families may have experienced*
- *A piece of writing about their journey exploring any emotions and questions they have*
- *A prayer for people facing this sort of journey today*
- *Write five words that best describe your thoughts and feelings about this experience.*

When you feel that the young people have had sufficient time to reflect on their own feelings, ask:

- Do you know any places in the world where people have become refugees?
- Do you know why they have become refugees?
- What stops us from welcoming refugees?
- How can we welcome new people in our community?
- How can I play my part in welcoming new people into our community?

This could be an opportunity to introduce some real-life refugee experiences through news stories, personal testimonies or from the CAFOD blog.

Adapted from a game by Pat Baker

(The Joint Board of Christian Education)

List of belongings

A spare set of clothes

A favourite doll

A thick blanket

A favourite action figure

Quilt

Teddy bear

Wellington boots

Family Photograph

An Umbrella

Wedding photo

A raincoat

Baby bottle and baby food

A change of shoes

Nappies

Your pet

A potty

iPod

Mountain bike

A sharp knife

A laptop

A basket of food

A portable TV

A container of water

Mobile phone

Rope

Sewing/knitting box

Money

Plastic sheet

Your jewellery

Your favourite book

Camping stove

Cooking pot

First aid kit

A chair

Kettle

A mattress

A tent

A set of cutlery

Pet food

DVDs

A camera

iPad

A washbag

